

Voyages of Discovery Reflective Essay

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Thinking back on the last three weeks has been so exciting. In all of my 40 years of teaching and the many courses that I have taken, none has been so challenging but inspiring for me. As I looked through my journal, I began to realize what an experience the “dig” was for me. My first lines for the first day were: “What a memorable awesome day”! This is the way it was for me everyday. As I listened to the agenda for the day, I wondered if this was going to be too much for me. Would I be able to do all of the work? But as we were introduced to each other and the archeological team, I began to relax and decide that I could do this. The morning went quickly, as we searched for evidence of the French living in this area. We began to find pieces of brick and mortar. Others were luckier, as they found a coin, nails and buttons. It was okay though, as the process was very interesting and informational. Then it was off to Chimney Point. After lunch, we had a fantastic presentation by Jeanne Brink. Hearing about her native background and the importance of the Abenaki in Vermont, had me thinking about the need to carry on their traditions. I have taught Vermont History and included information about the Abenaki in Vermont. I presented their history past and present. However, after reading the specific articles about the different families from Swanton and Highgate that were presented in our notebook, I began to realize how little I really knew. I didn’t really understand how they were struggling to keep traditions alive. The discrimination for the children in school must have been so difficult for them. Knowing that Jeanne Brink’s

grandmother didn't pass on the traditions, as she wanted her children to learn "the white man's way" as we have heard so often. After hearing her speak and show her baskets, I am more determined to learn more about the Abenaki's and how we can help them to pass on their traditions to their children. She brought tears to my eyes hearing about her children and grandchildren not wanting to learn about basket making etc. after their teen years. I asked her if this could be taught to someone like me. When I heard that it couldn't be, I then felt that something had to be done. How can we encourage their children to continue on with their wonderful traditions? As a teacher, parent, grandparent, what role can I play in helping these wonderful people? I need to read more and the resources that you have made available will be a start. It also makes me think about my own family and our French background. What am I doing to keep family traditions continuing? This lady has been a great inspiration to me personally. I hope that I can give to my students the respect for their culture that she has for hers. Thank you for bringing her to us.

Going back to my journal, I realized that each day was so full. It was just so rewarding for me. Looking back at some of the readings especially "Archeology: History Found in Pieces", they are beginning to help me to understand how I will plan out my unit for the beginning of the school year. Listening to Steve and his team helped me to understand the process. Now that I go back to the articles, I can comprehend even more the techniques that they use to go through a "dig". On Tuesday, working beside Donna and her teammates, was very educational for me. Now it has reinforced for me the importance of "hands-on activities for students. I was just so into it. The time flew for me. Steve's team was all caring and so patient with all of my questions. Every day was the same. Going over to Chimney Point that day

was a treat. Elsa is a wonderful host. Hearing Andre Senecal was special. I hadn't seen him in years. I took a course from him when I was doing Canadian Studies. Again he was very interesting. Hadn't thought about the French as simple people. Nothing fancy about them in this area. Loved the tattoos on the man's legs. I know that my sixth graders would love to see that. I do know that after hearing him speak, I need to review my information on the French, as I feel very weak in that area. I know the basics but want to know more. I enjoyed going over to Fort St. Frederic. It had been some time since I had visited there. I thought about what he said about being a "mall" for the settlers. What an interesting way for students to learn about the people in the area.

Doing work in the lab made me wonder if we needed to keep all of those little pieces of brick. However working side by side with Allison, we decided that probably for the first few days, it would be necessary. In between checking records and cleaning, I looked at other artifacts and the kit. Again it gave me some ideas for planning a unit that would certainly involve hands-on activities for students. I am looking at starting my school year with a unit on archeology, which will include the precontact period.

Was very excited to see the "Lemon Fair" project. Again everyone at this site shared information so eagerly. I am planning to visit this site for my field trip this fall. I didn't realize that this was going on this year until this course. Again visiting the Middlebury Library was a treat and very informational. I had experimented with Google Earth before but found doing it with others gave me the confidence to use it this year with my students. Probably they already know how to use it.

By Friday I was beginning to feel a little overwhelmed. With the readings, lectures and all of the great experiences, I needed time to sort it all

out. After talking with you about possibilities for my unit, I did begin to feel a little more comfortable. The next week I took time to review some of the readings, go through my journal and decide what direction I would go in for my introduction to archeology. I gave Jen Staats a call at the Rokeby and discussed my thoughts with her. We will be meeting on Tuesday, August 7th to outline a plan for the beginning of the school year.

I did go back down the third week and spent time looking over the kit again. Extracted some ideas for a kit that could be used with the Rokeby or any adapted for any other historic site. I also spent Thursday working with some volunteers digging and sorting. It felt wonderful having some knowledge of what we were finding and what we were looking for at the “dig”.

On Friday I needed to go down and say goodbye to the team. They were absolutely the most awesome group to put up with a person like me who had so many questions. I stayed around for a while not wanting to say goodbye. What a sad day. I finally said my goodbyes and left.

For me this experience was one that I will never forget. At first I thought that maybe I was too old for this course. Would I be able to handle all that would be expected? What a surprise. However, I was tired the next week. But I did manage to read and research that second week. I can't say what was the best part. It was all fantastic. Journal writing was something that I never thought I would be able to keep up. What a change for me. I am still writing. As I prepared this paper, I reread my journal. I added to it, as there are things that I do not want to forget.

I have been so inspired by so many people in the past three weeks. The team, my peers, our speakers and you, Giovanna. You have encouraged me to instill in my students the awareness of our ancestors and to appreciate

what they did for them. I am thinking more of the Abenaki and the French in our area. My goal is for my students and myself to have a better understanding of their traditions and have respect for them.

Thank you Giovanna for all of the preparation that you did for this course. If I can do anything to help you get another grant or speak about this one, I would be most happy to do so.